

5440-80 Early Childhood Special Educator

The holder is authorized to provide early intervention services, including service coordination, case management and comprehensive evaluation services, to children age 3 through age 6.

In order to qualify for this endorsement, the candidate must demonstrate the following:

Knowledge Standards:

Demonstrates knowledge of typical and atypical prenatal through middle childhood growth and development, including the implications of a variety of delays, disorders, and disabling conditions for learning and development; appropriate procedures and strategies for identifying and supporting the learning and development of infants, toddlers, and young children with special needs; and procedural, consultation/collaboration, and management knowledge and skills essential to implementation of an effective early intervention or educational support program, as delineated in current national professional standards¹. Specifically, the educator understands:

Foundations:

Typical and atypical prenatal through middle childhood growth and development within each domain, including the wide variation in how young children learn and typically develop; the integration of development across all skill areas; and the importance of secure, responsive relationships and consistency of caregivers to infants', toddlers', and young children's learning and healthy development

Biological, genetic, environmental, familial, linguistic, and cultural factors in infants', toddlers', and young children's development and their impact on exceptionalities

The importance of sensory exploration and play to infants', toddlers', and young children's cognitive, motor, perceptual, linguistic, and social development

The developmental consequences of stress and trauma, protective factors and resilience, the development of mental health, and the importance of supportive relationships

The role of families as the primary context for young children's development, including the importance of parents' expectations for their children, and how infants', toddlers', and young children's development is affected by and affects parents, siblings, and extended family

The key roles of the early childhood special educator as teacher, advocate, consultant, facilitator, and collaborator within the early intervention/early childhood special education agencies and support systems

The philosophical, ethical, historical, and legal foundations of early intervention and early childhood special education services and programs, including the evolution of key litigation, legislation, and regulations affecting these programs

Current models and theories that form the basis of early intervention and early childhood special education practice

Current laws, regulations, and procedures governing the referral; intake and/or screening; identification/evaluation; eligibility determination; development, implementation, and monitoring of Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP) and Individualized Education Plans (IEP); and the range of services and support for infants, toddlers, and young children with disabilities and their families

Professional and ethical standards of practice

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Program Development, Consultation, and Collaboration:

Characteristics, processes, and roles associated with effective collaboration, teaming, consultation, facilitation, and communication within family, school, and community systems

The articulation of Vermont's learning standards for infants, toddlers, and young children²

Family systems theory and principles of family-centered practice, including how to work cooperatively and respectfully with all families to support infants', toddlers', and young children's learning and development

Strategies for effective group facilitation and leadership

Local, state, and community resources, service delivery systems, and systems of care available to support infants, toddlers, and young children and their families

The different roles of the various specialized therapeutic service providers (e.g., OT's, PT's, SLP's) available to support infants, toddlers, and young children with disabilities

Roles and responsibilities of paraeducators and their supervision

Assessment:

The comprehensive evaluation process, including legal aspects, appropriate procedures, and principles of non-discriminatory evaluation

Appropriate strategies for assessing infants', toddlers', and young children's learning and development, involving families as active participants, and interpreting reports from specialized service providers

Appropriate strategies for identifying family resources, priorities, and concerns

Measurement theory and practice, including issues of validity, reliability, norming, and bias

Disabilities and Interventions:

Characteristics of the disabilities stipulated in state law, and impacts of these disabilities on infants', toddlers', and young children's learning and development and on family functioning

The importance of physical and interpersonal environments on infants', toddlers', and young children's growth and development

Curricular design and instructional strategies that build upon children's play and curiosity and engage the unique intellectual and psychosocial nature and needs of infants, toddlers, and young children

Specialized curricula, instructional strategies, alternative communication modes, and assistive technologies that can enhance development across domains

Strategies for supporting and enhancing learning and development across environments, for incorporating interventions into existing environments (e.g., homes, child care centers, hospitals), and for facilitating maintenance and generalization of skills across environments

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Health and safety issues, including procedures regarding disease and accident prevention, hygiene, and first aid; the signs of emotional stress, harassment, child abuse and neglect in infants, toddlers, and young children; state and federal laws and regulations pertaining to early childhood educators and programs

Foundations of Basic Skill Areas:

Development of Oral Language and Literacy – Processes, principles, and dimensions of oral language acquisition, including the phonemic, morphemic, semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic systems of language and their relationship to the development of early literacy; the impact of physical, emotional, and cultural factors on language development and the acquisition of reading and writing; the role of metacognition in language and literacy development; the elements of effective, age-appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication; the ways in which creative and active early learning environments and activities provide opportunities for establishing the foundations of literacy

Second Language Acquisition – The process of second language acquisition and distinctions between language learning issues and learning disabilities

Numeracy – The continuum of development of mathematical thinking, particularly in the areas of mathematical reasoning and quantification

Behavior – Typical and atypical social/emotional, psychological, and cognitive development as they relate to behavioral development

Motor Skills – Typical and atypical sensory and motor development; functioning issues associated with various common disabling conditions; relationship of sensory and motor functioning to learning, behavior, and demonstration of competence in a variety of tasks

Adaptive Skills – Typical and atypical communication, cognitive, and motor skill development as they relate to the development of self-help skills in infants, toddlers, and young children

Performance Standards:

Working in collaboration with families, early educators, and other professional and paraprofessional personnel, the Early Childhood Special Educator determines eligibility for early intervention and special education services; develops, implements, coordinates, and evaluates family-centered early intervention and special educational programs for infants, toddlers, and young children with special needs; identifies and implements accommodations to activities or environments in order to support inclusion; and provides direct services, in order to enable infants, toddlers, and young children with special needs to meet Vermont's learning expectations and to support their families. Specifically, the educator:

Foundations:

Advocates for the particular needs of infants, toddlers, and young children with early intervention and special education plans and for an effective, comprehensive system of support services for all infants, toddlers, and young children and their families

Adheres to ethical and professional standards, and state and federal legal and regulatory requirements pertaining to the education of infants, toddlers, and young children identified as having special needs, and to the involvement of their families

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Program Development, Consultation, and Collaboration:

Works cooperatively and respectfully with all families to support infants', toddlers', and young children's learning and development, including using collaboration skills to foster respectful and beneficial relationships with families and to encourage their participation in decision making and planning

Uses a variety of data and resources to develop Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP) or Individualized Education Plans (IEP) that incorporate both child and family outcomes, in partnership with family members, professional colleagues, and personnel from other agencies, as appropriate

Obtains multiple perspectives on the strengths and needs of infants, toddlers, and young children with disabilities, and defines authentic, observable, measurable, and sequenced short- and long-term objectives and benchmarks in service and educational plans

Coordinates services for infants, toddlers, and young children with special needs and their families across agencies

Designs and evaluates processes that support infants', toddlers', and young children's and their families' transitions among and across programs and settings

Collaborates with families, early educators, and community personnel to enhance infants', toddlers', and young children's learning, growth, and development, including coordinating educational programs and helping families to secure appropriate services

Collaborates with early childhood educators and/or other care providers in accommodating infants, toddlers, and young children with special needs within various settings by identifying, developing, or modifying materials, curricula, or aspects of the environment, and by modeling various methods and techniques

Demonstrates effective teaming and consultation skills with families and other service providers

Assessment:

Facilitates the comprehensive evaluation process, including adhering to appropriate program, state and federal guidelines, and procedures

Assists families of infants, toddlers, and young children to identify their resources, priorities, and concerns in relation to their child's development

Selects and uses a variety of appropriate informal and formal assessments and methods to assess infants', toddlers', and young children's cognitive, social-emotional, communication, motor and adaptive development and health for the purposes of establishing or re-establishing eligibility for early intervention and special education services, and for monitoring overall development

Differentiates among assessments appropriate for different purposes

Interprets reports from specialized service providers

Incorporates the results of eligibility assessments into written evaluation reports that communicate the array of information gathered in a technically correct format that is understandable to all who must be able to use the reports

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Monitors, summarizes, and evaluates the acquisition of child and family outcomes as outlined in the IPSP or IEP

Develops and uses formative and summative program evaluation to ensure comprehensive quality of the total environment for children, families, and the community

Interventions:

Supports and facilitates family and child interactions, and the use of their natural environment as the primary contexts for learning and development

Uses appropriate and culturally sensitive adult learning strategies to support families in the level of participation that matches their preference (e.g., coaching, triadic, mentoring)

Incorporates individualized learning, developmental, and functional objectives into an integrated curriculum that builds upon the family's resources, priorities, concerns, and the natural learning opportunities that exist for each family, reflects children's interests, incorporates skills and concepts from across the content areas and developmental domains, and reflects culturally valued content and children's home experiences

Demonstrates effective communication and relationship building skills, interviewing skills, and home visiting methods that engage families of infants and toddlers and that are responsive to families' initial and ongoing priorities

Integrates the various specialized therapeutic services into ongoing intervention and educational practice

Monitors and evaluates the efficacy of interventions based on on-going observation and data collection, makes adjustments to infants', toddlers', and young children's plans based on these assessments, and provides support and feedback to families and to educators and service providers to adjust their practices

Implements curriculum using a variety of learning strategies, including play-based and teacher-directed approaches, in order to meet the needs of all young children

Plans indoor and outdoor environments that are safe, stimulating, engaging, developmentally and functionally appropriate, and intentionally designed to support early intervention or special education goals

Promotes the prosocial development of young children in the areas of self-awareness, personal responsibility, and respect for self and others

Uses various techniques appropriate to young children to encourage and teach positive social skills and interaction among children, and conflict resolution strategies

Selects and implements methods of behavior support and management appropriate for infants, toddlers, and young children

Anticipates peer conflicts and models how to engage in equitable and respectful conversation and behavior

Responds to and follows children's leads, including recognizing and supporting child-initiated play both indoors and outdoors, and developing activities to incorporate and extend their individual interests

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Additional Requirements:

Baccalaureate degree with a recommendation for licensure in early childhood special education, or a minimum of 21 credits in early childhood special education

A minimum of a practicum, or the equivalent, in early childhood special education at **both** the infant/toddler (birth to age 2) and preschool (age 3 to age 6) age levels.

¹ *What Every Special Educator Must Know: Ethics, Standards, and Guidelines for Special Educators. Fifth Edition. (The Council for Exceptional Children, 2003).*

² *Vermont Early Learning Standards: Guiding the Development and Learning of Children Entering Kindergarten. (Vermont Department of Education Early Childhood Work Group, Fall, 2003)*